

EAST MAIN STREET NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING NOTES - OCTOBER 6, 2009



On October 6, 2009 the City of Auburn Mayor and City staff met with neighbors of the East Main Street Neighborhood at Washington Elementary School, 20 E Street NE, to discuss neighborhood concerns.

Staff in Attendance: MAYOR PETE LEWIS, COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER DUANNA RICHARDS, COMMUNITY SERVICES PROJECT ASSISTANT KIRSTEN REYNOLDS, ASSISTANT POLICE CHIEF BOB KARNOFSKI, TRANSPORTATION PLANNER CHRIS HANKINS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS MANAGER SARAH MILLER

Community Members in Attendance: DACCA MICHAELIS, DEBRA REXVOAT, HERIBERTO & MARIA ORTIZ, JANICE & RICHARD OSBORN, PATTI BURHENN, CURT BURHENN, PAULINE THOMAS AND PHYLLIS IRBY

Announcements

Duanna Richards welcomed everyone, thanked them for attending and asked City staff to introduce themselves. Mayor Pete Lewis then indicated the primary purpose of the meeting was for the City to listen to the residents' concerns, consider solutions, respond to questions they could answer immediately and identify items for follow up. The City takes notes of the meeting, which are then sent out to the attendees.

- ***Mayor's Update*** -- residents were encouraged to sign up for the Mayor's Update, an e-newsletter Mayor Lewis sends out every Friday about what's taken place in the City during the week, upcoming events, etc. He also uses the listserv to send out alerts about road closures, emergencies, etc. as a way to keep the community informed. Since this is a listserv, if you decide you don't want to continue receiving it you can unsubscribe at any time.
- ***How and why are these Neighborhood Safety Meetings held?***
Meetings are set up when residents call staff with concerns about criminal activity, wanting to start a Block Watch and/or if they are interested in having the City staff present information to the neighborhood. Sometimes these meetings are held in conjunction with other City departments for special projects. There have been several meetings happening every month just like this one; it's a great way to connect with neighborhoods and get information out to the public.

General Questions/Comments

- ***Can anything be done about landscaping enforcement for businesses?***
There is a purple building located on East Main Street that was converted and leased to a Nail Salon; they have not been maintaining their landscaping and it looks awful. Code Enforcement has been working with the owners of this building for several years now, the owners live here in Auburn; they choose to paid the fines instead of maintaining the landscaping.
- ***Does the noise ordinance cover loud car radios?***
Loud car radios are a nuisance and common problem around all the High Schools and Middle Schools; even parents have been known to be part of the problem when dropping off kids. Residents should call 9-1-1 to report the activity. The possibility of a pattern could help the police catch them in the act and cite them.

Emergency Preparedness Related Questions/Comments

- ***Emergency Preparation on potential flooding***

The Army Corps of Engineers has notified the City of Auburn of a situation at the Howard Hanson Dam which may require the release of more water than usual during extreme rain events. As a result of this increased water release, parts of Auburn are at a higher risk of flooding. The general location of this higher risk is confined to the area of Auburn north of 22nd Street NE and those areas immediately bordering the Green River and Mill Creek. This situation may continue for the next 18-24 months or potentially longer depending on the nature of the repair work to be completed at the dam.

It is important to note the Army Corps assures us there is no risk of the dam failing. Renters, homeowners, and businesses are advised to review their insurance policies to ensure they are covered for flooding, sewer backup, landslides, sinkholes, and other issues commonly associated with significant rain events.

The good news is that due to preventive efforts by the Army Corps, King County and the four Green River Valley cities that would be affected by potential flooding, the chance of flooding at the Auburn gauge has been reduced from a 1 in 4 probability to 1 in 33. While it is not time to relax, it does give us a degree of hope that all of the hard work on the grout curtain and levees we've been doing will indeed make a difference.

The City is continuing our work to inform and protect. The sandbagging lots are open and training is being conducted for levee walkers to check the levees this winter. The City will continue to hold meetings and work with populations in need. Information will always be updated on the City's website, in the Mayor's Update, the City's Emergency Radio Station AM 1700, on TV21, the Auburn Alert (reverse 9-1-1) system and in the ***Auburn Reporter***. We do prepare for the worst and work for the best, and our pledge to you is that as soon as we have the information so will you. Sign up for Auburn Alert, our reverse 9-1-1 system, and email alerts; have a battery powered radio available so you can stay informed. Go to: <http://www.auburnwa.gov/emergency/disaster.asp>, click on Green River and Howard Hanson Dam Information.

- ***Can community members get free sand bags?***

Each resident will be limited to 30 bags per trip (approximately a half ton) and will be provided tools and sand to fill their bags. Volunteers will be on-hand as available to help fill and load bags. Groups and individuals interested in volunteering to fill sandbags for the public should contact Emergency Management to schedule a time. For more information, contact the Emergency Management Department at (253) 876-1925.

Free sandbags are available to the public in Auburn during the following days and times:

- Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 12 p.m. until dusk.
Les Gove Community Campus, 910 Ninth St. SE. (located at the SE corner of the park)
- Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at two locations.
Les Gove Community Campus, 910 Ninth St. SE. (located at the SE corner of the park)
Fulmer Field, 5th and K St. NE. Sandbags will be located in the parking lot.

- ***Do any other neighborhoods have pumps?***

The intersection of 2nd and G Street fills up with water; will a water pump ever be installed? No, but there is an area that helps hold water located on 21st Street. It works mainly through gravity and will be redesigned in the future.

- ***How to be prepared in case of an emergency***

Emergency Preparedness Manager Sarah Miller talked briefly about programs citizens can participate in to prepare their homes, families and neighborhoods in case of disaster. The Emergency Preparedness Division offers Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training; it is an eight week hands-on practice in such topics as first aid, triage and survival skills. Another program discussed was Map Your Neighborhood, which is now being combined with the Block Watch training. Neighbors are taught how to get organized before a disaster happens. Generalized disaster preparedness training is also available to interested community groups and organizations. To schedule any of these classes for your neighborhood, contact (253) 876-1925 or e-mail emergencyprep@auburnwa.gov; you can also visit their website to see a training schedule: <http://www.auburnwa.gov/disaster>.

Public Safety Related Questions/Comments

- ***Auburn Police Coverage***

Auburn has 102 commissioned Police officers, 58 of which are assigned to patrol six Police sectors. There are at least six officers and a Police Sergeant on patrol at any given time covering 212 miles of roads, serving 67,000 people in two counties that are divided by two rivers. Officers are assigned for two years to an area so they get to know the area and proactively solve problems. All Police calls are prioritized with threat to life or property first.

- ***What can be done about vacant homes in the neighborhood?***

Vacant homes in the area seem to attract dumping and vandalism. Residents should call Code Enforcement at (253) 931-3090 to report dumping; there might be identifiable items that police can follow up on. If you see people actually dumping items you should call 9-1-1; this will give the police a better chance to catch them and prevent it from happening again.

- ***Is graffiti and tagging getting worse around the city?***

It was getting really bad; this year's Clean Sweep focus was to remove graffiti all over the city. It has been much better lately and people are continuing to cover/remove the graffiti.

Property owners and neighborhoods repetitively struggle with graffiti. City Code requires property owners to remove graffiti within 15 days; a new Graffiti Removal Assistance Program was created in partnership with Parker Paint to help property owners take action. If neighborhoods are having graffiti problems they should call the City's Code Enforcement Division to report the problem at (253) 931-3090 or call the new Graffiti Hotline (253) 931-3048 Ext. 7, the officer will open a case and call your information into Parker Paint. Residents can go to the Parker Paint in Auburn to pick up supplies to cover the graffiti.

City Council enacted a spray paint law that doesn't allow anyone under 18 years old to purchase spray paint in Auburn. Individuals caught near a graffiti site with graffiti tools may also be subject to arrest under a new Council ordinance. Another program being explored is to have juveniles previously caught doing graffiti participate in community service to clean up graffiti.

- ***What is Block Watch?***

Block Watch is built on the concept of neighbors watching out for each other because you know better than anyone else who belongs in your neighborhood and who doesn't. If you think "maybe I should call 9-1-1 about this," you should. Residents were encouraged to set up a Block Watch. Once the group is formed, Community Programs Officer Andy Gould will come out to do the formal training on what to watch for, how to react and how to get neighborhood participation. Groups are encouraged to get together several times a year to maintain an active group.

- ***If you have a problem or see anything suspicious call 9-1-1!***

Residents were encouraged to report everything to 9-1-1. The citizens of Auburn own the 9-1-1 system. You should call 9-1-1 whenever you have an emergency, feel something suspicious is going on, need to speak with an officer or file a report (online reporting is also available [www.auburnwa.gov/Emergency/Police/Citizen Online Police Reporting.asp](http://www.auburnwa.gov/Emergency/Police/Citizen%20Online%20Police%20Reporting.asp) if you would prefer to file your report that way). **PLEASE NOTE:** If calling from a cell phone you need to ask for an "Auburn Call Receiver."

Auburn shares ownership of the 9-1-1 system with other South King County cities and the calls go to a dispatch center so residents shouldn't worry about tying up the phone line when making non-emergency calls. When you call 9-1-1 it will be answered by a "Call Receiver." The Call Receiver will determine whether or not your call is an emergency to be handled right away or to have an officer make contact with you to file a non-emergency report. They will ask questions which are specifically designed to obtain information so that the proper response can be made for your call.

If you want to know what the officer finds out be sure to let the Call Receiver know you DO want to be contacted by the officer when they've completed their investigation.

In addition to emergency issues, residents should also call 9-1-1 for non-emergency issues such as street lights out, stop lights out, missing stop signs, fireworks, loose dogs, sewer backups, water leaks, etc. An alternative is to report them via the City website. The link is under Online Services at the top of the page and is called Online Citizen Report (half way down): [www.auburnwa.gov/Business/public works/Online Citizen Report.asp](http://www.auburnwa.gov/Business/public%20works/Online%20Citizen%20Report.asp).

- ***Online Crime Mapping***

The City of Auburn launched an online crime mapping tool that allows citizens to view reported criminal activity throughout the city with near real-time data. The service is provided by CrimeReports.com and is free to the public.

Using this website, citizens can get easy-to-read incident crime maps from data that is uploaded directly from the Auburn Police Department's activity reports. Crime incident data typically includes: Incident type, date, location, distance from citizen's address, event identification/case number, and/or brief crime incident description. The reported location of registered sex offenders will also be provided on the map.

Citizens can also sign up to receive automatic daily, weekly or monthly email alerts if/when crimes occur near their home, office, local school, etc. and tools such as filters and analytics will allow citizens to search for specific crimes in their area, or to view trends via charts and graphs.

Access CrimeReports.com via the City's website at www.auburnwa.gov/crimereports. This enhancement, coupled with the already existing online police reporting service that was launched in 2007 allowing citizens to file non-emergency reports, is one more way that the City is using technology to increase public safety and awareness. For more information on these services, contact the City of Auburn Police Department at (253) 931-3080.

Streets/Sewer/Traffic Related Questions/Comments

- ***Could a sound barrier be installed to reduce train and traffic noise?***

The noise is so loud from the railroad and Hwy. 18, is there anything that can be done? The City has talked to the State about the possibility of building a sound barrier and they have already declared they will not.

As a community, Auburn has worked with the State and railroads for 75 years. It's been a long road and will continue to be into the future. Mayor Lewis explained that Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) is planning to reopen their Stampede Pass line; this will increase train traffic immensely. The City has already made plans for an M Street Grade Separation project; this project will separate M Street SE from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway's Stampede Pass line by lowering M Street SE between 4th Street SE and 6th Street SE and constructing a new railroad bridge. M Street SE will be widened to two lanes in each direction in this area and will also include new sidewalks and bicycle lanes. Design is currently underway and construction is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2011.

- ***Why is M Street going under the railroad tracks with all the existing water issues?***

The project has to go under because with the close proximity of Hwy 18, it would be impossible to go over. The underpass will have a "bathtub" which requires pumps and a large detention pond. The City has spent \$6 million in the pre-design process to plan for water and access issues that include lowering and widening two northbound lanes, two southbound lanes and accommodating a center turn lane; bike lanes and sidewalks would also be needed for pedestrian access through the affected area.

- ***Why weren't two speed bumps installed on G Street?***

G Street seems to be a speeding launch pad for students exiting the high school. Prior to any speed bumps being installed a voting ballot was sent to residents from the Public Works Department regarding the installation of speed bumps; the vote came back in favor of only having one speed bump located between 2nd and 4th Street, and the second speed bump was voted down. Residents at the meeting voiced there is still a need for the second speed bump. Public Works staff will take another vote to see if the majority of the neighborhood wants the second speed bump installed.

- ***Can the City help with plans for the proposed remodel of Auburn High School?***

Residents were concerned about having the front of the remodeled high school pushed into their front yards. The City doesn't get involved in the School District's processes, but the District will have public meetings where residents can hold these conversations.

- ***Save Our Streets (SOS)***

The City is down to the last 16 miles of streets needing repairs as part of the SOS program. Every local street will be brought up to a specific standard and every time a street is redone there can be old clay pipes that once disturbed need to be replaced. The City has been trying to get the really bad streets replaced without increasing residents' utility bills by spacing them out. In the next four-five years everything should be done. Once everything has been done there will be only minor maintenance.

State funding was cut for the maintenance of large arterial streets like Auburn Way so the City is now blocking truck traffic, excluding local truck traffic, from using these streets. The Port of Seattle started a conversation about helping to fund the maintenance of these arterials if truck traffic can use these routes again.

- ***Why is the alley behind the Police Station in such disrepair?***

Alleys in Auburn are considered private roads, not public. The City's first priority is maintaining streets, if/when time and resources allow, alleys will also be maintained. The City has an established pothole patrol line that residents are encouraged to report potholes to: (253) 931-3048, ext. 1. After a location is reported, potholes will be repaired in approximately 48 hours.

- ***Why do photo enforcement cameras have to be placed in front of the schools?***

The group discussed Auburn's PhotoSAFE system; Mayor Lewis explained the law states these cameras are only allowed to be installed at warranted railway intersections, in school zones and at specified traffic intersections. Mayor Lewis noted there has been a 40% reduction of accidents and not one fatality accident in the PhotoSAFE intersections since the cameras were installed. The largest population of speeders in school zones are parents who just dropped off their children and the second are teachers; teenagers are actually the least likely to speed through a school zone because of the hefty \$200 fine.

- ***Are cars supposed to stop when pedestrians are crossing at the "island" crosswalk on East Main Street?***

Yes, drivers are supposed to stop for pedestrians at all crosswalks. The islands are used to help give pedestrians a chance to get across at especially busy intersections because more and more these days drivers are not using common courtesy. Residents did not like the island crosswalk at first but have seen traffic slow down to maneuver around it which shows it's doing what the traffic engineers intended it for.

Development/Planning Related Questions/Comments

- ***Is there going to be a through street behind the Post Office?***

Mayor Lewis explained there are plans to have a street, called the AB Corridor, located between the Post Office and Mohawk Plastics. The road will eventually go from the transit center, under 15th Street, to B Street and on to 277th Street. The total project was going to cost \$14 million. The City had to stop construction to mitigate for wetlands located next to Mohawk Plastics and has been working on this issue for the last two years. Eventually there will be a north to south corridor at this location.

Summary of Solutions Discussed/Action Items

1. Public Works will send a new voting ballot to residents in the G Street neighborhood regarding the installation of a second speed bump and removal of a the roundabout.

Community Services Team Contact Information:

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- Kirsten Reynolds, Community Services Project Assistant, (253) 876-1964, or kreynolds@auburnwa.gov